NATIONALISM AND ARCHAEOLOGY: On the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote Past

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ABSTRACT

Nationalism requires the elaboration of a real or invented remote past. This review considers how archaeological data are manipulated for nationalist purposes, and it discusses the development of archaeology during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the relationship of archaeology to nation-building, particularly in Europe. Contrastive conceptions of nationality and ethnicity are presented, and it is argued that adoption of modern constructivist perspectives is incompatible with attempting to identify ethnic/national groups solely on the basis of archaeological evidence. The political uses of archaeology are also reviewed for the construction of national identities in immigrant and postcolonial states. The problematic nature of nationalistic interpretations of the archaeological record is discussed, and the essay concludes with a consideration of the professional and ethical responsibilities of archaeologists confronted with such interpretations.

L'oubli, et je dirai même l'erreur historique, sont un facteur essentiel de la création d'une nation, et c'est ainsi que le progrès des études historiques est souvent pour la nationalité un danger. . . . Peut-être, après bien des tâtonnements infructueux, reviendra-t-on à nos modestes solutions empiriques. Le moyen d'avoir raison dans l'avenir est, à certaines heures, de savoir se résigner à être démodé...

Renan 1947–1961:891, 906

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INTRODUCTION

Numerous recent publications attest to considerable interest in the relationship between archaeology and nationalism (e.g. Atkinson et al 1996, Diaz-Andreu & Champion 1996, Kohl & Fawcett 1995). The current popularity of this topic seems relatively easy to explain for reasons related both to the recent upsurge in nationalist movements and conflicts throughout the world and to the practice of archaeology. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the concomitant restructurings of states in eastern Europe have led to the outbreak of numerous ethnic/national conflicts, many of which, as in the Balkans and in the Caucasus, involve contentious territorial and proprietary claims based on the ancient past and the archaeological record. Archaeological remains frequently are the sites of violent demonstrations or targets of attacks, as recently demonstrated by the Palestinian response to the opening of a new entrance to a tunnel through the old center of Jerusalem. Even more violent consequences ensued from the destruction of the Babri Masjid at the site of Ayodhya in northern India in December 1992, an event in which fabricated archaeological evidence (Mandal 1993, Bernbeck & Pollock 1996) played a critical role. In short, archaeology figures prominently in current national events, and this visibility naturally raises questions as to the political uses of and significance accorded to archaeological remains. The innocence of the discipline, sometimes cloaked behind a facade of empirical objectivity, cannot be maintained in the light of such graphic, well-covered current events.

The present interest in exploring the relationship between archaeology and nationalism, however, is not exclusively explained by reference to these events. Equally important have been developments internal to the practice of archaeology and advances in the broader historical study of nationalism. Recent histories of archaeology (e.g. Trigger 1989, Patterson 1995) have stressed the social and political settings in which the discipline functions—its social dimension. This concern inevitably leads to a consideration of archaeology's relationship to the political unit or state in which it functions. Similarly, there has been an increasing awareness of the differences among various "regional traditions" of conducting archaeological research (e.g. Trigger & Glover 1981; Politis 1992, 1995), and these traditions characteristically coincide with specific nation-states. That is, there are distinctive Russian (Shnirelman 1995; Dolukhanov 1995, 1996; Guliaev 1995), French (Audouze & Leroi-Gourhan 1981, Dietler 1994, Schnapp 1996), German (Härke 1995, Arnold & Hassman 1995, Marchand 1996a,b), and Spanish (Diaz-Andreu 1995, 1996a,b) archaeological traditions, for example, and these can be profitably compared and contrasted (e.g. the comparision of Spanish and Russian archaeological traditions in Martínez-Navarrete 1993). Certain international archaeological organizations, such as the World Archaeological Congress (Ucko 1987, Rao 1995) and the

European Association of Archaeology (Kristiansen 1993, 1996; Shore 1996) have been established in the wake of political controversy and/or with explicit political agendas; such organizations highlight the political dimensions of the discipline, including inevitably the ways in which archaeological research is structured by the policies of specific nation-states. Finally, a central tenet of the entire postmodern critique of science, which in the most visible Anglophone archaeological literature takes the form of postprocessual archaeology (e.g. Hodder 1986, 1991; Shanks & Tilley 1992), is its rejection of total objectivity and of the possibility of conducting neutral, value-free research. Rather, this critique emphasizes the subjective interests/perpectives of scholars and the political contexts in which archaeological research is conducted.

For similar external and internal reasons, historians and social theorists have increasingly addressed the phenomenon of nationalism, and it can be argued that they are doing so with increasing sophistication and insight (see Hobsbawm 1992:2–5). There is considerable debate in this literature on the following issues: the degree to which nationalism represents a radically modern form of consciousness, a novel collective identity linked to processes of modernization and tied exclusively to the basic unit of contemporary political organization, i.e. the nation-state (e.g. contrast Gellner 1983 and Anderson 1991 with Duara 1995); the extent to which the nineteenth-century European experience of nation-building is emulated throughout the postcolonial world; whether the new nations that have emerged in Asia and Africa in this century have followed a fundamentally different, less secular, and more spiritual path to join the recognized league of nations (e.g. van der Veer 1994, Chatterjee 1993); and whether in the process of nation-making the past is "invented" or "rediscovered" through the selective use of inherited symbols, myths, and material remains (contrast Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983 with Smith 1986). Nevertheless, these theorists concur in emphasizing the socially constructed character of nationalism and in rejecting "essentialist" or "primordialist" accounts that view nations as objective, durable phenomena, the origins of which typically can be traced back to remote antiquity (for an intelligent anthropological review of this literature and the distinction between essentialist/primordialist and instrumentalist/constructivist accounts, see Eriksen 1993).

The relationship of archaeology to nationalism is changing. Historically, archaeologists have helped underwrite many nationalist programs, according historical significance to visible material remains within a national territory (Anderson 1991:163–85). They are still playing this role throughout many areas of the world (Kohl & Tsetskhladze 1995; Kaiser 1995; Chernykh 1995; Ligi 1993, 1994). Today, however, some are critically examining how archaeological data are manipulated for nationalist purposes (Kohl & Fawcett 1995, Ben-Yehuda 1995, Diaz-Andreu & Champion 1996, Silberman 1989, Gathercole & Lowenthal 1990), while others are celebrating the inevitable po-

litical nature of the discipline and promoting alternative indigenous reconstructions of the remote past (Ucko 1995a,b; Graves-Brown et al 1996).

This article reviews the historical relationship between the emergence of modern nation-states and the development of archaeology. It briefly examines examples of nationalist archaeology that emerged throughout the world in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and it analyzes the evolutionary archaeology that developed particularly in imperial and colonial settings (Trigger 1984). This paper also considers why archaeological data are peculiarly susceptible to political manipulations and why this evidence is often accorded great significance in nationalist constructions. Finally, the essay addresses the professional and ethical responsibilities of archaeologists when they confront problematic nationalist interpretations of the material culture record.

NATIONAL AND NATIONALIST ARCHAEOLOGIES: DEFINING THE SUBJECT

After a long discussion of the relative merits and problems with defining a nation according to objective or subjective criteria, Hobsbawm (1992:8) opted for the working definition of "a sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a 'nation.'" From an anthropological perspective, such a definition does not sufficiently distinguish a nation from an ethnic group or *ethnos*, so additional criteria must be postulated in which a nation is equated with a certain kind of modern territorial state so that there is a congruence—either achieved or desired—between the national and political unit. The important point is that national*ism* is the program for creating nations and exists prior to the formation of the nation (Hobsbawm 1992:9–13): Nations are constructed by nationalist politicians and intellectuals, and these processes are supported by social classes that benefit economically and politically from their construction (cf Karakasidou 1997 for an extremely well documented example).

The emphasis on the eminently political character of nation-formation is important and can be applied to our treatment of archaeology's relationship to nationalism. That is, it is important to distinguish national from national*ist* archaeology. The former refers to the archaeological record compiled within given states. The latter refers more inclusively not only to that record but also to policies adopted by the state that make use of archaeologists and their data for nation-building purposes, and such policies may extend beyond the borders of the state. Nationalist archaeology is frequently involved in the creation and elaboration of national identities, processes that occur not only within states but also as states expand and interact with other states. This perspective makes it impossible to maintain Trigger's (1984) seminal but too sharply divided typology of nationalist, colonialist, and imperialist archaeologies.

A great unscrupulous scramble for Egyptian antiquities followed in the wake of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century. Monumental works of ancient art were hauled home and redefined the changing Parisian landscape—most famously with the placement of an obelisk from Luxor in the Place de la Concorde in 1836, an event attended by the French king and over 200,000 spectators (Fagan 1975:261). Colossal artifacts from ancient civilizations now became peculiarly transformed into national symbols, and the subsequent French and British competition for such loot served the useful national function of filling up both the Louvre and the British Museum. Archaeologists, employed as colonial officers in imperialist settings, were engaged in a form of nationalist archaeology in the sense that their work was used to puff up the glory and sense of self of their employer; Layard, wanting to dig at Nimrod in northern Mesopotamia in 1846, provided a classic example of this form of nationalist archaeology when he wrote the British Ambassador to Constantinople, Sir Stratford Canning: "The national honour is also concerned in competing with the French in deciphering the cuneiform inscriptions. To accomplish this task materials are necessary. . . . If the excavation keeps its promise to the end there is much reason to hope that Montagu House [the British Museum] will beat the Louvre hollow" (Larsen 1996:95–96).

Britain had to outpace France in the quest to exhume and send home texts and colossal works of ancient art. The British Museum was then and remains now an eminently nationalist institution, even though many of its finest acquisitions were pilfered from abroad, having been excavated by archaeologists in its employ. The study of the past promoted by Napoleon or the archaeology practiced by Layard can be described as simultaneously imperialist, colonialist, and nationalist.

NATIONALISM AND THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF EUROPEAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Archaeology's origins can be traced back to the Renaissance, if not earlier, and the antiquarians' descriptions of material monuments, such as William Camden's *Britannia* (1586), predate the American and French revolutions, which ushered in the age of modern nation-making, by as much as two centuries. Nevertheless, archaeology became a legitimate scientific pursuit and an academic discipline during the nineteenth century, the heyday of nation-building in Europe. These processes were chronologically coincident and causally interrelated.

The establishment of the Musée des Monuments Français and the transformation of the Louvre into a museum occurred in the wake of the French Revolution and became models for other "national" museums that, in turn, became characteristic institutions of the nascent states of post-Napoleonic Europe.

Probably the most famous example of this process was the establishment of the Museum of Northern Antiquities, which opened in Copenhagen in 1819 under the direction of CJ Thomsen, who had organized its materials under his newly devised Three Age system of successive Stone, Bronze, and Iron periods. Denmark had suffered setbacks in the Napoleonic Wars, and the precocious development of Danish prehistory during the early and mid-nineteenth century must be understood against this backdrop of territorial loss and cultural retrenchment (Sorensen 1996). Each emergent nation-state had to construct its own national identity, which required the active forgetting or misremembering (cf the opening quote of Renan) and the rediscovery or inventing of one's past. Myths of national origin had to be elaborated from a variety of sources, including, notably, the material remains found within the state's demarcated territorial borders.

The association between the development of archaeology and nation-building was so obvious as to remain largely unquestioned throughout the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century; the roots of countries were extended back into the mists of the prehistoric past. The practice of archaeology and the institutional forms it acquired differed from state to state in part because each state had its own specific history and time of national consolidation; the nationalist significance accorded to archaeological data also varied according to the availability of historical records, the relative weighting of historical to archaeological sources, and the empirical contents of those records. Schnapp (1996), for example, argues that archaeologists have always been handmaidens to historians in France and that "archaeology's contribution [to the construction of French national identity throughout most of the nineteenth century] was minimal" (Schnapp 1996:54). Others (e.g. Dietler 1994) perceive a greater role for archaeology in the process of turning "peasants into Frenchmen." The Romans may have defeated the Gauls, but different aspects of this defeat could be celebrated, and national monuments to the Gallic ancestors were built on the sites of the battles, such as at Alésia, and the state supported their excavations. Later French prehistory (or protohistory) may have remained relatively undeveloped throughout the nineteenth century, but France was the center of Palaeolithic archaeology, and Boucher de Perthes was conceived as the father of archaeology not only in France but elsewhere throughout continental Europe, which was a source of considerable national pride. Nationalist archaeology in France—in the sense discussed above—was also embroiled in the establishment of French schools throughout the Classical and Near Eastern worlds, first in Athens and Rome, then later in Iran, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Algiers.

Following the brilliant study of Marchand (1996a), the development of archaeology in Germany has to be explained not principally by reference to German Romanticism or the reaction against the universalist ideals of the Enlightenment. It must also be associated with the development of ancient art history

and Germany's pronounced "cultural obsession" with philhellenism, the glories of ancient Greece, and their subsequent establishment of exacting standards of scholarship in allied disciplines, such as comparative philology and *Altertumskunde.* Wilhelm von Humboldt's promotion and institutionalization of a neohumanist *Bildung,* based on a rigorous Classical education, also, of course, served many eminently practical purposes, such as the training of dedicated, apolitical civil servants (cf Marchand 1996a:27–31; BG Trigger, personal communication). As in France, German nationalist archaeology found its purest expression in the excavation of Classical sites (e.g. at Olympia in Greece and Pergamum in Anatolia) and in the establishment of German institutes throughout the Mediterranean and later the Near East. The Institut für Archäologische Korrespondenz was established in 1829 by private individuals interested in Classical antiquities, though it received occasional state support throughout the middle decades of the nineteenth century; in 1872 this institute was transformed into a *Reichsinstitut* and became the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, a heavily state-subsidized organization meant to showcase the achievements of German scholarship. *Kulturpolitik* was a state policy intended to enhance German national prestige through the support of "disinterested" German philanthropy and scholarship abroad, particularly throughout the lands of the Ottoman Empire; in reality, it disguised imperialist aspirations that occasionally were made explicit. Baron von Wangenheim, the second-in-command at the German embassy in Constantinople, stated the policy unequivocally: "The interim intellectual goals already pursued, or to be pursued by our schools, our doctors, and our archaeologists could very well become, in the course of time, the crystallization point onto which German economic and colonizing undertakings are grafted. The economic will follow the intellectual conquest . . . and then these two . . . will naturally be followed by political exploitation" (cited in Marchand 1996b:318).

Kulturpolitik engaged the energies of German archaeologists working throughout Classical lands and the ancient Near East. Nationalist archaeology in Germany thus developed largely beyond the borders of Germany, resulting in a corresponding lack of attention to German prehistory, a neglect first addressed by G Kossinna at the turn of the century. This situation was later "rectified" by the Nazis, particularly under the programs extolling the German past that were headed by H Himmler and A Rosenberg. The state attention that the Nazis lavished on German prehistory proved, of course, catastrophic, leaving behind a "Faustian legacy" from which the discipline has yet to recover fully (Arnold 1990, Arnold & Hassman 1995).

The ways in which nationalism and archaeology intersected in Greece and Italy have to be explained internally in terms of the specific making of those modern nation-states and the constructing of modern Greek and Italian national identities as well as in terms of the international prestige accorded to

their Classical antiquities and to their consequent plunder (cf McConnell 1989). Archaeology in Spain, on the other hand, represents a different case. Spanish archaeology did not develop during a time of imperial expansion, as in France and Britain, or imperial aspiration, as in Germany; rather, it emerged and its national identity was refashioned in the wake of the losses of its Latin American empire in the early nineteenth century and most of its other possessions at the end of the century (cf Diaz-Andreu 1995:43). Focus on the medieval origin of the Spanish nation involved the partial denial or begrudging recognition of its Islamic heritage (Diaz-Andreu 1996b), a factor that was specific to the Iberian peninsula. An overtly nationalist Spanish archaeology, associated with sites such as Numantia—also a scene of defeat—was relatively weak and developed late. The florescence or curtailment of regional nationalist traditions in Spanish archaeology (among the Galicians, Catalans, and Basques, in particular) reflects restructurings of the Spanish state during this century; in post-Franco times, however, Spanish archaeology has been decentralized, encouraging the development of regional archaeologies within the country's 17 autonomous provinces (Ruiz Zapatero 1993).

Archaeology's relationship to the state varied from country to country. It could take the relatively innocuous and necessary form of the detailed compilation of the prehistoric and early historic sequence for a region or an entire nation. Nationalist archaeology in this sense can be equated with the cultural-historical approach and evaluated positively in the sense of the more systematic and complete tracing of temporal and spatial variations in the archaeological record than was often achieved, for example, by the more schematic unilinear evolutionary approaches of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Trigger (1995:277) even suggests that archaeologists establishing their regional or national prehistoric sequences could provide a justifiable collective pride in the past and help resist colonial and imperial domination.

PEOPLING THE PAST: THE ADVENT OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL CULTURE CONCEPT, THE SOVIET *ETHNOS*, AND ETHNOGENESIS

The introduction of the archaeological culture concept, developed by Kossinna and popularized by Childe, entailed certain dangers for the nationalist-inspired archaeology that became obvious during the 1930s and 1940s. It is, however, useful to recall that the urge to people the past that culminated with the proliferation of archaeological cultures was itself a healthy reaction against the epochal and homotaxial evolutionary approaches championed by de Mortillet and Morgan (Daniel 1962:82–84, 1975:236–51). Unfortunately, the advance in interpretation achieved by the use of the archaeological culture concept came at a considerable price, a sum that is still being calculated today

(Shennan 1989, Graves-Brown et al 1996, Diaz-Andreu 1996a). It also paved the way for nationalist interpretations, where specific archaeological cultures were unproblematically seen as ancestral to contemporary ethnic or national groups. This procedure, which implied a a static, durable, or essentialist conception of ethnicity/nationality, could even be promulgated by explicit state policies. The case of Soviet archaeology and its use of ethnogenesis, the formation of *ethnoi*, is instructive.

The officially sanctioned Soviet conception of an *ethnos*, long championed by Yu V. Bromlei (1973, 1983) among others, can be characterized as primordialist or essentialist; i.e, attachment to an ethnic group was based on objective, relatively durable, and fixed criteria, such as language, racial group, dress, house forms, cuisine, and other cultural traditions or time-honored ways of doing things (cf also Gellner 1980, Shnirelman 1996:8–9, and Tishkov 1997:1–12). This view contrasts sharply with the more situational and relational conception of ethnic identity favored by most Western anthropologists (Eriksen 1993:10–12). From this latter perspective, a group is a distinct *ethnos* that considers itself such and is considered such by other groups. This attribute of categorization is most important, a feature for which there is no necessary material culture correlate.

The Soviet *ethnos* and the classic concept of an archaeological culture resemble each other, and both contrast sharply with more modern views of ethnicity. These modern views insist that ethnic groups are malleable and constantly changing as the historical situation in which they exist unfolds; ethnicity, like culture, is never made but is always "in the making" or, perhaps, if times are tough, "in the unmaking" or "disappearing." Ethnicity and nationality are conceived similarly in that they are socially constructed phenomena in which traditions are invented and consciously manipulated for political, economic, and social reasons. Ethnicity is a more universal form of group identity with a past that may extend back to earlier historic times, indeed, perhaps, into the mists of prehistory, but it can never be securely traced. An archaeology of ethnicity, in short, is an impossible undertaking if one accepts this constructivist perspective on ethnic and national identity (*contra* Jones 1997; cf also Trigger 1994:103), while it is a relatively straightforward exercise if one adopts the Soviet concept of *ethnos* or if one uncritically equates archaeological cultures with living or past ethnic groups.

A related concept that became central to the practice of Soviet ethnology, archaeology, and physical anthropology from the mid-1930s on is ethnogenesis, or the formation, of peoples (cf the seminal studies of VA Shnirelman 1993, 1995). The determination of ethnogenesis became one of the central tasks of Soviet archaeology when the discipline switched from a Marxist-inspired internationalism (or, perhaps, politically motivated universalism) to one concerned principally with the ethnogenetic history of the early Slavs, i.e.

when Great Russian chauvinism and the buildup to the Great Patriotic War replaced internationalism. Ironically, the effect of this transformation was to have every ethnicity/nationality alike, Russian and non-Russian, engaged in this ethnogenetic mandate or search for its origins. Competition over the remote past was intimately tied to the very structure of the Soviet multiethnic federal state (Suny 1993, Zaslavsky 1993, Tishkov 1997). Administrative units (republics and autonomous republics, provinces, and regions) were named for specific ethnic groups, although they always contained more than a single *ethnos* and in many there was no ethnic majority. It was an easy and logical step to transform the precisely defined borders of these units into the national territory or homeland of the eponymous *ethnos*. This process, in turn, could be legitimized through the selective ethnic interpretation of the archaeological record (for an example, see Lordkipanidze 1989), reifying the political unit by according it great antiquity. In Ronald Suny's striking phrase (1993:87), the Soviet Union became the great "incubator of new nations," a source for many of the conflicts that have arisen since the state self-destructed.

The concept of ethnogenesis is linked directly to the concept of the *ethnos*: durable and well-nigh permanent in the Soviet perspective or constantly changing in the opinion of most Western scholars. For the former, the determination of origins is the critical question. When did the ethnic group, conceived as a little, preformed homunculus already possessing all the essentially defined characteristics of the given *ethnos*, come into being: during the Bronze Age, during the Iron Age, with the collapse of Classical Antiquity and the ensuing Great Migrations, or after the conquests of Timur or Genghis Khan? It is perceived as a straightforward historical question with an ascertainable answer to be provided by the archaeologist's spade or by some long-overlooked or recently discovered historical document.

For the Western scholar, the problem is much more complex, indeed essentially unsolvable. Ethnogenesis is only a relatively minor matter associated with the beginnings or initial formation of a given ethnic group; more significant and more complex are the changes that group will experience over time—its ethnomorphosis (Kohl 1992:172, Wolf 1984). These changes may—though not necessarily will—lead to the appearance of new ethnic groups through processes of assimilation and/or fundamental change or disappearance through various natural or human-induced processes, such as ethnocide. Even an ethnic group that exhibits considerable continuity and stability over long periods of historical time will nevertheless change in fundamental ways; thus, for example, pre-Christian Armenia of the Iron Age differs from Christian Armenia of the Middle Ages and from the newly formed Republic of Armenia today (cf Kohl 1996).

Obviously, both perspectives have some degree of merit: Continuities, as well as changes, can be documented for the Armenian experience or for many

relatively long-lived ethnic groups. Cultural traditions cannot be fabricated out of whole cloth; there are real limits to the inventions of tradition. As Hobsbawm (1992) argues, states or nationalist politicians may, in fact, make nations, but they cannot totally make them up. It should be obvious that one could not have constructed mid- to late nineteenth-century Italians out of the Chinese or New Guinean cultural traditions. Here it is useful to distinguish between strict and contextual constructionism (Ben-Yehuda 1995:20–22 and personal-communication). The former denies any constraints imposed by past or current realities and quickly devolves into the hopelessly relativist morass of some postmodern criticisms. Contextual constructivism, the theory advocated here, on the other hand, accepts that social phenomena are continuously constructed and manipulated for historically ascertainable reasons, but it does not deny an external world, a partially apprehensible objective reality, that cannot totally be reduced to invention or social construction. Representations or constructed cultural perceptions are real, but reality encompasses more than representations and exists independently from them.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN IMMIGRANT AND POSTCOLONIAL NATION-STATES

The relationship of nationalism to archaeology is not limited to Europe; it can be traced throughout the world. Different areas exhibit different forms of nationalism, not all of which emulate perfectly, or even closely, the European pattern. This essay cannot be totally inclusive, but it will briefly discuss the relationship of archaeology to two alternative nationalisms: (a) modern states that are composed principally of immigrants to the country, such as the United States, Argentina, and Israel, or that are relatively new, composite constructions formed by the mixture of peoples of diverse origins, such as Mexico and Peru; and (b) states that have freed themselves from colonial rule and/or emerged particularly during the second half of this century, such as Zimbabwe and India.

The construction of a national identity for a nation of immigrants is a different task from that for a nation whose citizens believe has been theirs since time immemorial. The role of archaeology in the construction of the former correspondingly differs and typically has been associated with the adoption of a universal evolutionary/natural historical perspective on its prehistoric past and on its still-surviving indigenous peoples. Prehistory becomes part of nature, and its makers may at first go unrecognized—as in the Moundbuilder controversy—romanticized as noble or denigrated as savages. In any event, they are conceptualized as different and less than the civilized European immigrants, who have a real history forged in the Western tradition that can be traced back

to Classical and biblical sources and beyond to the Bronze Age civilizations of the ancient Near East. Trigger's well-known critical assessment of the static, uncreative image of the American Indian in archaeology (1980) can be more generally extended to other treatments of indigenous peoples in other immigrant lands, such as Australia. It also closely resembles the perspective of natives promulgated by imperialist archaeologies elsewhere, such as in Africa or Asia (Trigger 1984).

In terms of archaeology's role in the construction of national identities, three additional points should be made. First, the task of constructing identities differs greatly depending on how many indigenous peoples survived contact or conquest and the nature of the cultural remains they left behind. Thus, obviously, the continuously changing, increasingly inclusive character of Mexican identity differs profoundly from what it means to be Argentinian. For these reasons, Mexican and Argentinian elements of identity differ in terms of their symbols of state (e.g. the Mexican flag with its Aztec eagle and snake on a cactus); the contents of their national museums; their efforts to include the various peoples who once lived in their country or their efforts to effectively deny their very existence [as celebrated in Argentina's "la conquista del desierto" of the 1870s and museum collection of dead and live natives; cf Podgorny & Politis 1990–1992)]; and the general scale and significance of archaeological research in these countries. As in Europe, the relationship of archaeology to nationalism must be traced state by state; generalizations are either hazardous or trite.

The case of Mexico demonstrates that Trigger's static image of the American Indian cannot be applied uniformly throughout the Americas (or at least uniformly south of the Rio Grande). The Mexican Revolution of 1910 assured the victory of *indigenismo*, a movement that consciously incorporated the indigenous pre-Hispanic peoples of Mexico into a redefined and more inclusive national identity (Lorenzo 1981:199). The state controls archaeological research in Mexico and has promoted the recovery of its pre-Hispanic past, even at the expense of its colonial heritage. Thus, for example, the state-sponsored excavations of the Aztec Templo Mayor destroyed part of the colonial center of Mexico City. It may be fair to query whether all the indigenous peoples of Mexico have been equally incorporated in this process or whether some—the Aztec/Mexicans, in particular—have received preferential treatment. Nevertheless, the perceptions of Mexican archaeologists about their pre-Hispanic past may differ profoundly from those of foreign, particularly US, archaeologists working in Mexico whose activities may be viewed with suspicion and mistrust (Lorenzo 1981). Is questioning the concept of a pre-Hispanic Mesoamerica value free or is it peculiarly divisive for Mexico, particularly its ethnically distinctive regions, such as Chiapas? Are US archaeologists who interpret the prehistoric cultures of the US Southwest as evolving separately from

those of northwest Mexico most plausibly interpreting the archaeological rec-
ord or are they effectively naturalizing the border defined by the 1848 Treaty
of Guadalupe that ended La Guerra de Agresíon Norte Americana (Weigand
1991)? Nationalism and archaeology are intricately interwoven into the very
fabric of the Mexican state for internal and external reasons. An external rea-
son is its relations with its very large, powerful, and expansionary northern
neighbor.

Second, the process of national identity formation is continuous and ongo-
ing; what it means to be Mexican, Argentinian, Native American, and so on to-
day differs from what it did during the last century or earlier this century.
Many changes may be considered progressive in that more peoples' pasts are
incorporated into increasingly inclusive national identities, although it is un-
clear whether such processes reflect anything more than a specific state's secu-
rity and stability. Legislation has been passed by different countries to protect
the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples, including the repatriation of cul-
turally significant objects. Even long-extinct peoples lacking obvious heirs
can be resurrected through archaeological research and incorporated into the
national identity. Thus, for example, 10,000- to 12,000-year-old Palaeo-Indian
remains from southern Patagonia are seen today as the first Argentinians, *los
primeros Argentinos*, who initiated the national adventure (see the cover to
Wroclavsky 1997), and their excavations are appropriately celebrated by the
state (L Miotti, personal communication).

The cultural patrimonies of immigrant and newly independent states are be-
ing redefined and extended in part as a result of ongoing archaeological inves-
tigations. This too can be viewed as progressive and desirable, although other,
fundamentally economic, factors undoubtedly also are at work, including the
growth in tourism and the remarkably high prices currently being paid for an-
tiquities on the art market. Thus, for example, the government of Guatemala
recently protested the opening of an exhibit of pre-Columbian antiquities at the
Boston Museum of Fine Arts, claiming that the materials on display were ille-
gally excavated and stolen from the country. The Guatemalan Vice Minister of
Culture bitterly complained that the objects were "pages ripped out of the his-
tory book of the nation"—a striking metaphor of national identity (Yemma &
Robinson 1997:A28). Regardless of the sincerity and justice of the complaint,
it is not irrevelant or irreverent to note that looted Mayan artifacts are fetching
astronomical prices at auction houses, such as Sotheby's, where a gold object
recently sold for more than half a million dollars, and that tourism, which in
Guatemala often includes visiting famous pre-Hispanic sites, currently ranks
as the country's second most important industry—after coffee (Delle & Smith
1997).

The third and final consideration concerns the political uses of evolutionary
theory. While it is undoubtedly true that the universal evolutionary/natural his-

tory perspective initially adopted by most immigrant states served the then-useful function of relegating the indigenes to a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder, it must be emphasized that there was no reason inherent in the theory of cultural evolution that it function in this manner. The same point can be made for diffusionism, a perspective contrasted to the doctrine of evolution from the late nineteenth century onward and which easily devolved into emphasizing the unique contributions of a gifted people/master race. That is, both explana-tory approaches were and still can be used for racist purposes, but such use has to be explained historically and not seen as intrinsic to the doctines themselves. Indeed, both can have the opposite result: evolution stressing the unity of hu-mankind and diffusion documenting how all peoples contribute to a shared his-tory.

Nation-states that have arisen out of the ruins of empire face their own pe-culiar problems of constructing their national identities. One common diffi-culty is that the borders they inherit frequently correspond to colonial adminis-trative units and contain multiple ethnic groups, none of which could function unproblematically as the new nationality. Archaeology can be implicated in these processes (Schmidt & Patterson 1995). Zimbabwe, of course, is not only a nation named after an archaeological site, it is also a site that became an ex-ceptionally powerful symbol of colonial misrepresentations and native accom-plishments (Hall 1990, 1995). It maintains that function today, but it also has become a site of ethnic tensions within the new state. Are the ruins to be iden-tifed exclusively with the majority Shona people or interpreted more broadly as also ancestral to the Ndebele (cf Schmidt 1995:126–27)? As elsewhere, control of the past provides a source of legitimization for control of the pres-ent. Archaeology can be an expensive undertaking, and many new nation-states in Africa and elsewhere simply cannot afford to support adequately a state archaeological service or national museum; this problem is compounded when foreign archaeologists still dominate the ongoing research conducted in the country and when the discipline is perceived by state officials—fairly or unfairly—as a relic of colonial rule (Schmidt 1995). The future relationship between archaeology and nationalism in such cases is unclear, though a type of development may be envisaged that is associated with the seemingly inelucta-ble growth of tourism. Archaeologists can expect to receive state support when officials recognize the profits to be made from affluent tourists eager to visit archaeological sites. Whether such development is a blessing or a curse re-mains to be seen.

Another difficulty faced by many postcolonial nation-states concerns the inheritance of the ethnic/national identities that were formed or refashioned during colonial rule. For example, castes in India—their functions and degree of segregation/separation—were transformed during the time of British rule. Similarly, recognition that there was an Indo-European family of languages

suggested historical relations between speakers of this family of languages, connections that stretched westward from South Asia across the Eurasian land mass to northwestern Europe; this discovery led to new ways of classifying peoples (Aryans versus non-Aryans, for example) both by the British and by the South Asians themselves. New questions then could be asked of the historical and accumulating archaeological evidence: Did the archaeological record support an Aryan invasion of the subcontinent? If so, when and who was defeated and displaced? In this instance, the British also established an enormously large and complex archaeological service that the Indians inherited and the Pakistanis imitated after independence. Scholars differ sharply on their assessment of this inherited legacy of colonial rule and the manner and degree to which it continues to structure an understanding of the past and its relevance for the present (contrast Paddayya 1995 with Chakrabarti 1997; cf also Lamberg-Karlovsky 1998).

The case of Chinese archaeology and its relationship to nationalism presents a special case. The millennia-long continuity of Chinese civilization sets it apart, as does the traditional respect accorded its antiquities and the humiliation—perceived and real—it suffered at the hands of Western powers during the nineteenth century. The development of Chinese archaeology during this century cannot be understood apart from the early Western-initiated excavations (e.g. JG Andersson at Yangshao, Davidson Black at Zhoukoudian) and the anti-imperialist sentiments they fueled, particularly in terms of what were perceived to be their denigration of Chinese civilization and assessment of its derivative character (Tong 1995:184–88). The consequent backlash still profoundly affects the practice of archaeology in China today. Whether the cradle or nuclear center of Chinese civilization is restricted to the middle reaches of the Yellow River or extended to encompass essentially all the Han-dominated regions of contemporary China, its origins are pure and unsullied by any diffusionary processes, especially those emanating from the West (Falkenhausen 1993, 1995). After the revolution and the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the infrastructural state support of archaeology and its guiding theoretical model—Marxism—were initially patterned on the Soviet model, but expanded or contracted for internal reasons, such as the Great Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), during which time archaeologists were persecuted and antiquities destroyed on a massive scale (Tong 1995). Archaeology and nationalism in China remain closely interrelated today.

An article on archaeology and nationalism cannot fail to mention the unique role archaeology has played in the construction of Israel and Israeli national identity. Arguably, archaeology has contributed more to this case of state formation than to any other (Elon 1994, Shavit 1986). In terms of the above discussion, how do we even classify Israel? It certainly is not an immigrant state, in the sense of the United States, Argentina, or Australia, for the century-old

migration to Palestine has been perceived by most as a return to an ancestral homeland, a view that is tangibly reinforced through the continuous excavation of antiquites dated to biblical times. Certainly, it is impossible to characterize Israeli archaeology as dominated by a universal evolutionary or natural history perspective in the sense of American archaeology. Is its practice, then, better considered a specific form of colonialist archaeology, as defined by Trigger (1984)? The question itself is charged with political significance. Three features of Israeli archaeology are particularly distinctive: (*a*) The state significance accorded to and popular interest in certain archaeological remains are extraordinary, as perhaps best exemplified by the former swearing-in ceremony of the Israeli army (IDF) at Masada (Ben-Yehuda 1995:147–62); (*b*) the excavation and presentation of past remains is highly selective and directed to the reconstruction of Iron Age through early Roman times or to the First and Second Temple periods (cf Abu el-Haj 1998); and (*c*) the form of nationalism that both inspires and sometimes impedes the practice of Israeli archaeology is explicitly religous, not secular, which means that archaeology fulfills a certain sacred or, for some, sacrilegious function. The combination of archaeology and religious nationalism can prove extremely volatile, as the recent destruction of the Babri Masjid in India so poignantly demonstrated.

MANIPULATING ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS FOR NATIONALIST PURPOSES: WHEN THE MAKING OF ALTERNATIVE HISTORIES BECOMES PROBLEMATIC

The interpretation of the archaeological record is hardly ever straightforward, resulting in unambiguous, certain reconstructions of the past. This well-recognized fact, however, does not mean that archaeological data are capable of an infinite number of possible interpretations or that there are no canons of evidence and criteria that would allow most professional archaeologists in many, if not most, cases to arrive at the same most plausible "reading" of that record. There are or should be limits to one's embrace of hearing alternative, multiple voices on the archaeologically reconstructed past. Basic historiographic principles still apply. Certain facts are capable of being documented. For example, archaeological research can establish unequivocally that some Classic Mayan polities not only practiced extensive slash-and-burn cultivation but also constructed raised fields and engaged in a more intensive and productive form of agricultural production. It is an altogether more problematic exercise to assess the historical significance of the fact that the Mayans had raised fields. Were these fields a contributing factor to the decline of Classic Mayan civilization? If so, how and to what extent? Even with the continuous accumulation of evidence, there is always room for disagreement on answering these second types of questions, and archaeologists are not known for shunning con-

troversies; scholarly disagreements, indeed, may reflect a healthy, robust discipline trying to advance itself.

How then does one evaluate patently nationalist interpretations of the archaeological record? Are legitimate, long-neglected, and overlooked voices on the past now finally being articulated? Is such a development something to welcome or to query, and, if the latter, why and on what basis: scientific or ethical? Are nationalist interpretations inherently different and more problematic than other readings of archaeological evidence? A common nationalist reading of the past is to identify the entities archaeologists define, particularly archaeological cultures, in terms of an ethnic group ancestral to the nationality or aspirant nationality of interest. Such identifications provide the nationality in question with a respectable pedigree extending back into the remote past, firmly rooted in the national territory; land and people are united. Once made, such identifications then can be extended to interpret progressive changes, cultural developments in the archaeological record, as due to the activities of this ancestral ethnic group. If other evidence, such as that provided by linguistics and historical comparative philology, contradicts the model of autochthonous development, it typically can be accommodated. Now the gifted group in question moves into the national territory—it migrates, finding either empty space or benighted indigenes whom it civilizes or eradicates (for examples, see Shnirelman 1996 and Ligi 1993, 1994). Such nationalist interpretations seem able to accommodate flatly contradictory evidence. For example, today's Macedonians, the dominant ethnic group in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, are linguistically and culturally related to other southern Slavic peoples who migrated into the Balkans roughly during the middle of the first millennium AD; like the Serbs, they profess a form of Christian Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, they consider themselves heirs of the ancient Macedonians of Classical times and claim Alexander the Great as an ancestor, a view that is patently untenable.

Even when such reconstructions seem perfectly consistent with the archaeological record, the consistency is deceptive. The principal problem lies in the purported ethnic identification; as discussed above, archaeological cultures and ethnic groups are not synonymous, and modern constructivist perspectives on ethnicity and nationality preclude the possibility of a perfect correlation between material remains and ethnicity. Peoples' sense of themselves—who they are and what they have done—continuously changes and cannot be held constant over centuries, much less millennia. Ethnicities are not little perfectly formed homunculi or crystallized essences containing within them all the characteristics of their future development; rather, they are caught up in, even buffeted by, larger historical processes capable of altering and destroying them. The identification of some archaeological culture as ancestral to a given ethnic group represents a hopeless will-o'-the-wisp, a chimera inca-

pable of satisfactory determination. Moreover, the quest for such identifications is not only misleading, it is also dangerous, as a consideration of both the past and current practice of archaeology abundantly makes clear. Changes in the archaeological record cannot be explained exclusively by the activities of efficient causal agents, the gifted ethnic actors; numerous other factors, such as environmental and climatic changes, must also always be considered. If prehistory teaches us anything, it is that cultures borrow from one another, that technological developments are shared and diffuse rapidly, and that specific cultures and areas have not only advanced and developed but have also declined, often catastropically. In short, for many reasons, nationalist interpretations of the past are, at best, problematic and should be so recognized.

Archaeological evidence may be peculiarly susceptible to manipulation for nationalist purposes because it is physical and visible to a nation's citizens who interact with it, consciously or not, on a daily basis. Archaeological sites become national monuments, which are increasingly being transformed into lucrative tourist attractions. Their artifacts are stored and displayed in national museums and constitute an invaluable part of the national patrimony, a heritage that becomes more and more broadly defined; both sites and artifacts frequently are incorporated into state regalia as symbols appearing on national flags, currency, and stamps or memorialized in patriotic songs and national anthems. Maps are compiled showing the distribution of sites identifed ethnically and considered to be part of the state's cultural patrimony; not infrequently, such sites are located beyond the state borders, their represenation then constituting an implicit ancestral claim on a neighboring state's territories. Even objects of mass consumption, such as postcards and cigarette brands, may depict or be named after ancient sites. All such uses demonstrate forcefully how national identity is continuously constructed through the commemoration of the remote, archaeologically ascertainable past.

Nationalism and archaeology are also inextricably related at the level of state support for research and employment. Archaeologists often work directly for state institutions, such as museums, research institutes, and antiquities services; even in the unusually decentralized context of the United States, most US archaeologists, whether employed by private or state institutions, must still solicit federally financed foundations for funds to support their research. Is archaeology then peculiarly vulnerable to state pressures and manipulation for current political purposes? Should archaeologists function as agents of the state, and is it inevitable that the discipline in some critical respects, such as funding, is necessarily at the service of the state? Most of the time the connection between the state and archaeology may be mutually beneficial—a source of strength, not difficulty. A state needs an educated elite citizenry, and the instillment of national pride in past accomplishments may be appropriate and laudatory. But what happens when the state's agenda or the popular move-

ments driving that agenda appear more questionable on moral grounds or when the archaeologist is asked to verify some implausible, nationalist-inspired reading of the past? What are the professional and ethical responsibilities of archaeologists who function in the shadow of such states? This essay concludes by considering these issues.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: ATTEMPTING TO MANAGE NATIONALIST INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PAST

During the past two centuries, modern nation-states have become the basic unit of political organization recognized throughout the world; during that same period, our knowledge of the remote past has continuously advanced largely because of the ever-increasing corpus of evidence unearthed by archaeologists. Many questions remain unanswered; some indeed may be unanswerable. It is also true that alternative interpretations of archaeological evidence are not only possible but also common and characteristic. Mute material remains are inherently ambiguous—at least to some extent. Nevertheless, certain facts of prehistory and early history can be considered established; many other reconstructions of archaeological evidence constitute plausible working hypotheses that can be confirmed by additional research. Archaeology has developed—and this also is an ongoing continuous process—standards of recording *and* interpreting material culture remains. Thus, fantastic science-fiction interpretations of archaeological materials can be dismissed for violating the principle of uniformitarianism, which remains a basic tenet of archaeology, geology, and other natural sciences despite the recognition of past unique events and catastrophes.

Archaeologists, thus, can distinguish between what is well established, plausibly known, a matter of problematic conjecture, or sheer fantasy. Nationalist interpretations fall within this range of certainty to impossibility, depending on the arguments being made and the evidence used to support them. Ethnic identifications extending back over millennia, which are a favorite form of nationalist interpretation, are problematic and hazardous for reasons already discussed. The professional responsibility of the archaeologist confronted with such interpretations is straightforward: Emphasize that the identification is uncertain and tenuous and stress the real epistemological limits that circumscribe our ability to people the remote prehistoric past.

Archaeology benefits from the critically reflexive recognition that its data are inherently political: They are excavated and interpreted in a political context and are capable of being used for a variety of political purposes, including legitimizing nationalist programs. Nevertheless, archaeologists' recognition may come at the high price of superficial analyses and facile generalizations.

Archaeologists are not only citizens of nation-states and necessarily political animals, like their fellow humans; they are also scholars interested in reconstructing the past as best and objectively as they can. Knowledge of an archaeologist's politics does not provide a foolproof guide to his/her activities as an archaeologist. The Marxist VG Childe corresponded with the fascist O Menghin and interacted more intensely and productively over a much longer period with the elitist G Clark; all were great prehistorians in terms of contributing to our knowledge of the past, regardless of their wildly divergent political philosophies and how these philosophies helped shape their work. The discipline advances cumulatively for reasons that are both internal and external to the discipline and which may be only imperfectly correlated with larger political processes. Major Spanish prehistorians, such as P Bosch-Gimpera and H Obermaier, lost their jobs and were replaced by Nazi sympathizers and Falangists following Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War, but these obviously politically mandated changes had little practical or immediate effect on the practice of Spanish prehistory (Gilman 1995:2). State politics at the highest level were involved in the establishment of the Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan, yet a review of the activities of that institute over the 60-year period of its existence (1922–1982) reveals that it concerned itself mostly with addressing specific archaeological problems (searching, in particular, for the easternmost traces of Alexander the Great). The institute's archaeological work, of course, was not value free and had numerous political dimensions; nevertheless, its primary activities were concerned with the reconstructions of the region's remote past, and this work overshadowed its contemporary political functions (Olivier-Utard 1997:311).

Politics and archaeology are unquestionably interrelated phenomena; indeed, this entire essay has attempted to document how archaeology may be implicated in a potentially dangerous form of politics, nationalism. Nevertheless, a caveat is necessary: Archaeology is not to be equated with politics or nationalism. They are related, yes—even inevitably so—but they are still distinct and separate phenomena that must be understood on their own terms as well as through interaction with each other.

Acceptance of the political dimension of archaeology also entails moral and ethical consequences, and it is useful to distinguish these from the professional responsibilities, though these considerations, of course, may overlap. That is, an archaeologist who questions a specific prehistoric ethnic identification may be behaving in a way that is both professionally and ethically responsible. Archaeologists should be capable of distinguishing between what they can responsibly say as professional archaeologists or as prehistorians attempting to reconstruct the past and their own political views and the ways in which their knowledge can be used for political purposes. Archaeologists then may be able to support a particular reconstruction of the past as plausible or as the most rea-

sonable interpretation of the data and still condemn the political uses to which it may be put (Kohl & Tsetskhladze 1995:161). For example, even if the foundation of a Hindu temple had been uncovered by archaeologists beneath the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, India (which it had not; cf Mandal 1993), responsible archaeologists still could and should have decried the destruction of the mosque; similarly, whether today's Slavic-speaking Macedonians deserve an internationally recognized nation-state is a different question from whether they can trace their ancestry back to Alexander. The archaeological evidence can be decoupled from the political movement or state policy.

Ethical standards for accepting or rejecting nationalist uses of archaeology may vary in specific cases, but they should ideally satisfy the following three criteria: (*a*) the construction of one group's national past should not be made at the expense of others'; (*b*) all cultural traditions should be recognized as worthy of study and respect; and (*c*) the construction of a national past should not be made at the expense of abandoning the universal anthropological perspective of our common humanity and shared past and future, the positive lessons to be learnt from evolutionary and diffusionary prehistory. It may be unfashionable to suggest that some views of the past are problematic and dangerous and that certain universal standards be met. Although many people today question such views and impositions, it is useful to recall Renan's (1947–1961) sage counsel: To be right in the long run at times requires accepting the burden of knowing how to resign oneself to being démodé.

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